

**CITY OF NEWBURGH
ARTS & CULTURE FORUM 4**

Held on Wednesday, February 16, 2005

MEETING REPORT SUMMARY

Introduction

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Nicholas Valentine, who thanked participants for attending, and said that he and the Council continued to be encouraged by the results of the first three forums, and expressed his support for the work being done.

Jean-Ann McGrane, the City Manager, also welcomed participants and reviewed the goals for the Fourth Arts Forum. She indicated that this meeting was to be a working meeting to begin the process for organizing several city-wide events that would take place in Newburgh in 2005. She also reiterated several important recommendations for city-wide events that came out of the previous forum. Said Ms. McGrane:

First, the group recommended that the City build on existing events as it makes it plans for the future. Such events include the River Art Walk, the Riverfront Festival, the Downing Park Concerts, and the monthly Last Saturday events, to name a few.

Second, the group recommended several kinds of events as top priorities for Newburgh that would involve all of Newburgh's residents, from young to old, that could take place within the year. Some of the events that were recommended include landscape and architectural tours of the City, parades, public art projects and city-wide festivals involving music performances and workshops.

A smaller group of participants that we brought together after the last forum came up with similar recommendations. They reviewed with us existing events in Newburgh and suggested possible dates for potential city-wide, signature events. The dates they recommended included Memorial Day Weekend, several summer and fall weekends that feature riverfront events, and the year-end holiday season—particularly, New Year's Day. We noticed that a number of these events fell on the last Saturday of the month, a day that is already being widely promoted as a special, monthly arts and culture day in Newburgh.

Ms. McGrane said that the City was prepared to work with local arts and culture groups to assist in three city-wide events that would take place on three Last Saturdays, or Weekends, of the year—Memorial Day Weekend, the Last Weekend in October, and the Last Weekend of December (New Year's Weekend). Said Ms. McGrane:

I am pleased to say that the City is able to work with all of you by doing the following in support of these three Last Weekends:

1. *Offering the in-kind support of its personnel and services, including police, trash, transportation and other services in support of these events;*

2. *Setting up a restricted “trust” account to receive funds that may be raised from grants and donations for these Last Weekends;*
3. *Designating a point person in the City government who will be available on a part-time basis to help coordinate and market these Last Weekend events; and*
4. *Publicly recognizing the efforts of volunteers who assist in organizing these events.*

Following these introductory remarks, Jean-Ann McGrane and Arts Consultant Sara Pasti answered questions from the audience regarding the selection of these dates and the nature of the three events. Ms. Pasti remarked that these dates were selected in large part because they were able to take advantage of the existing “Last Saturday” monthly art celebration in Newburgh. Also, these dates would not conflict with existing city-wide events, including the those taking place at the end of June/Fourth of July and end of August/Labor Day.

The group then discussed themes or “through lines” that would link all three events and serve as event goals. The group proposed that all three events:

- Celebrate Newburgh
- Have a unique identity or “spirit”
- Involve everyone in Newburgh, especially young people
- Be profitable—encourage revenues to flow into the city through grants and through monies spent in local stores by event visitors
- Maximize use of existing performance spaces and venues
- Be multidisciplinary in nature
- Encourage community participation and collaboration

Following this discussion, individuals moved into three separate breakout groups to discuss the May event, the October event and the December event.

Breakout Sessions

Questions addressed in each of the groups included the following:

- What are some of the activities that might take place as part of this event?
- Who are the people and/or organizations that should be invited to participate in this event?
- Who volunteers to serve on a leadership team for the event?
- What is the next meeting date for your group?

Following the break-out sessions, reports were presented from each group and meeting dates for the May and October event committees were announced. The May committee’s first meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 2nd at the Newburgh Free Library. All interested parties, including people who participated in October and December break-out groups, are encouraged to attend.

BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Group 1 – Last Weekend in May (Memorial Day Weekend)

First, Group 1 reviewed events that are already planned for the weekend of Memorial Day:

- Progressive memorial services that take place throughout the City on Sunday morning
- Memorial Day Parade on Monday (City-sponsored)
- Children's events sponsored by the Glen Hines Community Center
- "Putting on the Ritz," evening of May 29th at St. Patrick's—a multi-generational, multi-cultural event
- Last Saturday ongoing, monthly events
- River Art Walk (Saturday and possibly Sunday)
- Arts Alliance Memorial Day Weekend Events:
 - Thursday evening—Art opening and open mike
 - Friday night—outdoor movies
 - Saturday day and night—live music and art salon
- Bicycle tours around the City
- Celebration by Trestle, Inc. of the launch of the Trestle mural project
- Downing Park: Garden tour and Pergola opening (Monday)

Next, the Group brainstormed about events that could be developed to complement the existing events, including:

- Adding college bands to the Memorial Day Parade
- Adding a river regatta element to the Parade
- Creating a special Arts & Culture parade float for the Parade, and working with kids to help build the float (George Czinkota and Natasha Cotton volunteered to spearhead this effort)
- A special Silverbrown Dance presentation done in collaboration with the Newburgh Free Academy
- The publication of a Weekend Guide or Program (including map and events listings) to promote the weekend activities and assist people in getting to them
- Special tours of airplanes provided by Stewart Airport (Sunday or Monday afternoon)
- An outdoor concert in the Downing Park Amphitheater (Monday, after the Parade and Pergola opening)

Organizations involved or to be involved in these activities:

- Youth Bureau
- Performing Arts Center
- Arts Alliance
- Radio and TV stations
- Downing Park
- River Art Walk
- Silverbrown Dance
- Putting on the Ritz

Proposed sources of funding/possible parade or float sponsors:

- Lowe's
- Home Depot
- Wal-Mart
- Pepsi-Cola
- Michael's

The next meeting of the Memorial Day Group is scheduled for Wednesday, March 2nd at 6:30PM in the Newburgh Free Library.

Tasks to be undertaken:

- Develop a special name for the weekend's arts activities
- Create a contest or otherwise involve children and/or students in the creation of a logo for the event and for the series of events

Group 2 – Last Weekend in October (Halloween/Octoberfest)

TO BE INSERTED BY CHUCK THOMAS

Group 3 – Last Weekend in December (New Year's Weekend)

The "winter" event group discussed the following concepts for the Last Weekend of December, which would take place on December 31st and January 1st. The group agreed that the events should have the following characteristics:

- Not be limited to traditional, seasonal and religious events
- Be eclectic in their nature
- Be flexible, practical and economical
- Take cold winter weather into consideration

Themes that arose included those related to "Unity" and "Light," such as a Winter Light Festival that builds from existing candlelight strolls sponsored in Newburgh, an Ice Festival, and a Winter Stroll. Participation in the trademarked "First Night" celebration was also discussed.

Participants agreed that the Weekend should include multiple phases and media, using multiple stages and venues to present both performing and visual art events. Another suggested focus for the event included transportation: Land/Air/Sea.

All agreed that the Weekend should involve the entire community, including churches, civic and community organizations, and other public spaces. They agreed that the events could be mixed in terms of costs—both free and for a fee—and that the Weekend should have a big finish. While the weekend should be orchestrated, the group agreed that events should be easily accessible and spontaneously participatory.

A timeline was set for the Weekend, with the goal of developing a budget by May, raising funds by September, and using the fall to produce the event. Funds are anticipated to be raised through sponsorships, ticket sales and contributions.

Next steps include: Identifying resources, creating a working group that involves arts organizations, schools, churches, civic organizations and groups that already sponsor winter events in Newburgh.

The December Weekend Steering Committee includes Frank DenDanto, Paul Ellis, Jim Ward and Justin Ward.